

Draft 3

Program Description: Off Campus Educational Program: Threshold

Threshold operate as part of the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences. The program will be designed primarily to serve pregnant or parenting teens who have dropped out of school or are not thriving in their current educational environment. A secondary population will include students who cannot attend school on a regular basis, or who have not succeeded within the MeANS learning community but want to continue their education.

Students will be accepted in a separate pool from the 9 – 12 graders at MeANS; this pool will be limited to 20 students for the first year. Threshold will allow MeANS to increase the number of students to its eventual goal of 220 without overcrowding the current building and adding greater stressors to students with anxiety and social/emotional disorders that make large groupings stressful learning environments.

One certified teacher will visit, teach and advise 10 students on a weekly basis. Students will progress academically by attending the weekly home visit, and working on subject matter throughout the week communicating with his/her advisor through the internet. Students and their children will attend bi monthly workshops that address key parenting issues that connect with standards and targets required for graduation. Each student will complete a capstone project or “passage” that will involve researching, creating, and reflecting upon an issue of utmost importance to that student. The “passage” must be approved by an advisory team of teachers, community members and content area experts.

An important aspect of Threshold will be its “two generation” approach. The program will focus on connecting students with agencies that can provide early education for the teen’s child. Threshold will collaborate with local and statewide programs such as Educare in Waterville, the Maine Educational Opportunity Center, Vocational Rehabilitation, Head Start, and Parents as Teachers. This kind of wrap around support has been correlated in many studies with greater success for the younger generation in school. The highly regarded Family Futures Downeast program makes use of these program elements as well as connecting their parents with college programming. As a part of MeANS, Threshold would open opportunities for its students through the tuition waiver and dual enrollment programs open to all public high school students.

The curriculum will be standards based, and will make use of the already developed standards that MeANS has developed to meet Common Core and State requirements. Particular focus will be paid to the parenting issues that all teen parents must face in completing their education: child nutrition, healthy relationships, transportation, child development, child safety, accessing health services, executive functioning and developing a career and college plan.

The program will first target Somerset County which has high rates of teen pregnancy – second highest in the state for the 18 – 20 year old group, fourth highest in the state for the 15 – 17 year old group. In 2008 there were 80 births to teens in Somerset. For more information about Somerset County go to [teen pregnancy prevention](#). As the program grows it will target neighboring counties first and then go to the counties where the greatest need exists. A three year start up plan will include growing by 20 students and two teachers each year and expanding to at least 2 counties by the end of the three years.

As part of MeANS, Threshold would bring much needed services to students who are highly challenging to serve within the traditional public school framework. The program would have the capacity to help MeANS its state-wide focus by serving students in any counties where services were not already available for this population.

Though the program will generate enough funds to cover ongoing operational expenses, MeANS will seek start up funding for this program from funders interested in Threshold's primary target population. The model's success will enhance educational opportunities for a significantly underserved population in Maine.